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Self-sacrifice victorious

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# CHRISTIAN EVOLUTION;

OR,

## The Divine Process in Human Redemption

By the Rev. JOHN COOPER.

EDINBURGH: MACNIVEN & WALLACE.

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### EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS.

#### *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.*

"To such a task Mr Cooper addresses himself in his work 'Christian Evolution.' Upon a system of induction truly Baconian he collects and arranges all his facts, and then seeks the principles involved in their very essence. In the first chapter he grasps the great truth, that while heredity is a principle in all Nature's operations, breaks in the continuity evidence themselves in the development of law. From this he rises by logical analogy to the statement of the proposition that regeneration is a break in the order of sinful life, and that through Atonement or regeneration sinful man is raised to the loftiest possible condition of existence. The second chapter deals with Divine Action direct and indirect with special application to the Christian doctrine of sin, which chapter with the succeeding one upon 'Reconciliation,' we especially welcome as a conclusive answer to Principal Tulloch's Baird Lecture upon this vital subject. . . . The style of the work is clear, forcible, and graphic, the thinking is logical and profound, and the conclusion arrived at is one that will meet with the assent of every earnest truth seeker."

#### *THE WORLD.*

"The nature of the work prevents us from reviewing it; but we may state that a perusal of it impresses us with the conviction that it is a specimen of singularly clear reasoning conveyed in a lucid English style."

#### *THE VICTORIAN REVIEW.*

"His region of thought is quite as elevated as that occupied by, for example, Chalmers; and in respect of the power of sustained, logical, original thinking he is, in the opinion of the present writer at least, not a whit inferior to the author of the celebrated 'Astronomical Discourses.' His scheme of reasoned Christian Philosophy is certainly more complete than that which Chalmers has bequeathed to the world. It is a scheme which brings all the main Christian facts and principles within the limits, not merely of probability, but of certainty. It presents, moreover, the most complete reconciliation of Christian theology with pure philosophy known

## EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS—*continued.*

to the present writer. . . . Hence his argument is unassailable by any shafts of mocking unbelief or atheistic ridicule. He finds that Christianity lies within the order of the universe, is necessary to the explanation of the universe as known to man, and forms the 'ohly intelligent and reasonable explanation that can be given of the 'mighty sum of things.' His system may be expressed in the words, 'The Philosophy of Christianity.' . . . It is not needful, nor would it be appropriate, to give in this place a full explanation of the system these works contain. It will suffice to say that it is thoroughly Christian and soundly orthodox, and pervaded by a spirit of the most earnest love both to God and man. No safer guide than John Cooper could any student in the field of Christian Philosophy choose for himself."

### *THE HERALD.*

"This portion of the volume presents many great and important truths in a condensed form. We give two weighty utterances as specimens of the striking way in which truths, the unfolding of which might fill a goodly volume, are here set forth. 'The Incarnation was the Infinite coming down into the conditions of humanity, in order to confront all the results of the creation of free agency.' 'The principle of conquest in the salvation of man is the principle of self-sacrifice in the Godhead.'"

"In the second section of the volume the subject discussed is 'Divine Action Direct and Indirect,' and very clearly the writer deals with the difficult question of the freedom of the human will. He defines 'will' as the movement of personality, and adds, 'In the finite personality it is the action of the moment; in the infinite personality the action is eternal.' There is much in this section that is worthy of thoughtful consideration. We most heartfully agree with the closing sentence, 'that the self-will of the sinner coming in between the will of God and its operations, is the sole cause of evil in the universe.'"

### *CHRISTIAN RECORD.*

"The book is peculiar in one respect, though saturated with Christian sentiment: there is only one quotation ostensibly made from scripture, that, viz., at the commencement, and even in that case the reference is not given. We will not hazard an opinion as to whether this is or is not as it ought to be. We may safely say, however, that the book is a thoughtful and earnest attempt to set forth the central truths of Christianity in a rational manner. A good deal is assumed throughout the book, but this is accounted for by the fact that, as the author says in his preface, the book is supplementary to what he has already written. But apart from this there is nothing assumed in the book which we do not heartily admit."

# SELF-SACRIFICE VICTORIOUS:

*RAYS OF DIVINE LIGHT*

ON THE

*FUTURE OF MANKIND.*

BY THE

REV. JOHN COOPER,

AUTHOR OF "SCIENCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE," "PROVINCE OF LAW," "CHRIST'S MODE  
OF PRESENTING HIMSELF," "SELF SACRIFICE," "CHRISTIAN EVOLUTION,"  
ETC., ETC.

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1884.





## INTRODUCTION.

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DURING the last eighteen years, at intervals of time, I have ventured to give to the world, in a series of volumes, the result of much thought and enquiry on some questions of grave and undying interest. These questions bear intimately on God's plan of government and man's position and destiny. I have a profound conviction that I have found in the self-sacrifice of the Supreme and Uncreated One a key to some at least of the grand mysteries which, as yet, are but faintly revealed to the human intellect. One of these mysteries has exercised, often with a very agony of thought, some of the keenest intellects of our age. I mean the ultimate destiny of man,—not of a few men, but of *all* men. This question has been forcing itself more and more on the attention of thinkers in our day. I have looked at self-sacrifice as bearing on the creative plans of God; and when I see the perfection that runs through these plans, down even to the minutest creature or object of which we can take cognisance, the thought is awakened, is it possible that man, the noblest of all God's works in this mundane

sphere, can in one solitary instance fail ultimately and hopelessly in reaching the original divine ideal? I have looked at self-sacrifice as bearing on the government of God, and as I see the plan of that government (in as far as it is cognizable by the finite intellect), so far-reaching, so all-embracing, that there is nothing in the universe, or in time, or in eternity, that can possibly be left outside its operations; and as I contemplate the *modus* of its working, moulding all things "from harmony to harmony" into one complete whole, under a wisdom whose grasp is wide as space and as lasting as time, and a Power, moreover, which never has been and never can be baffled; the question forces itself upon me, is it possible that this Divine order of government can fail to bring man—all men—at some epoch yet in the future, into perfect harmony and accord with its glorious Author? I have looked at self-sacrifice as bearing on the work of human redemption; and as I stand before the Cross, awed, melted, and overwhelmed by the grandeur of its revealings; and specially as I contemplate the expenditure of pity, condescension, love, and agony of which it is the exponent; the thought presses home upon me, can it be possible that a remedial scheme involving such wealth of self-sacrifice can contemplate anything short of the final home-bringing to the Divine fold of every poor wanderer?

And so in like manner, when I look at this grand idea as bearing on evolution in all the plans and processes of the Supreme Intelligence, on His past dealings with Nations, on the prophetic teachings of His Messengers, on the law of progress manifest alike in nature and in grace, on the underlying principles of all moral government, and on the capacities and possibilities of man's own being, I am ever and again brought face to face with the thought, can it be that this brief span constitutes the whole of its probation to a deathless nature.

I have subscribed to the "Westminster Standards." I must frankly admit, that according to the belief of the Church *generally*, these Standards teach that death closes man's probationary career. But considerable latitude of view is permitted, and I think wisely, on questions in these Standards which are regarded as not essential to a genuine Christian faith. To me this seems to be one of these questions—of deep and awful interest I grant—yet not essential to a soul's salvation. I feel therefore that I am at liberty to throw out some of my thoughts upon it. I do not mean to speak dogmatically as though the doctrine were established beyond question. The light which I think I have got, I give, and I am in search of more. Hence these pages.

The suggestions here thrown out are published with the hope that anxieties felt in

many hearts regarding the grave problems discussed may be set at rest, and that they may help to arrest the withdrawal of not a few from the communion of the Church.

The doctrine defended is not Universalism, nor Annihilation, nor Conditional Immortality, nor Purgatory ; but a reasoned statement of the probable future of those who pass out of this life in an unconverted state. And it is advanced with no purpose of undermining the Standards of the Church, but with the intention of removing certain doctrinal angularities of the Confession of Faith, which mar its beauty, impede its usefulness, and hinder its reception by many who are anxious to remain in the Church of their fathers.

There is a strong necessity for the doctrines of Grace being stripped of the human additions which prevent their being clearly seen, correctly understood, and cordially embraced. To the defence and illustration of the grand truth of "Grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life" the following pages are consecrated.



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## CHAPTER I.

### *PENALTY AND LOVE.*

1. **I**T is a truth admitted by all jurists, and attested by experience, that the severity of penal law tends rather to increase than to diminish crime. It is equally certain that the representation of God as a Sovereign Despot, dooming myriads to endless perdition irrespective of their own deeds, does not diminish sin in man, but increases it. Instead of softening and leading to penitence, such a representation hardens the heart and makes the sinner more defiant.

2. To soften the heart and quicken the spirit of rebellious man, God must be exhibited as a God of love, sacrificing even the Godhead to rescue him from the consequences of his own guilt. This intention alone warranted the mission of the Son of God to earth. Some of the sayings of Christ warn the sinner of future perdition; but they ground this awful penalty on the sinner's own acts, not on any severity or lack of benevolence in God.

3. Christ always spoke of the Father as holding out all the promises possible even to Him to draw the sinner back to the realization of the Divine life. Never did He represent God as cherishing satisfaction in the perdition of the sinner, or taking pleasure in dooming men to destruction.

4. Conceiving of God as only an absolute Sovereign, and representing Him as a relentless Despot, has introduced an element into theology which has wrought banefully in the Church and marred the power of the Gospel. A well-meant but injudicious zeal for the Divine justice at the expense of the Divine benevolence retards, rather than promotes, the conversion of souls.

5. The justice of God can never be impaired by the action of man. The principles and laws of Nature never allow the action of Divine justice to be neutralized. A violation of the Divine laws does not weaken those laws, but simply entails a penalty on the violater. Such is the perfection of all God's laws that not one of them can be violated with impunity. And the glory of God is shown, not in His jealousy for the maintenance of His Sovereignty, but in the manifestation of His grace in the salvation of sinners. It is in drawing the sinner out of his



sin into holiness that God's jealousy for the honour of His law is most gloriously displayed.

6. Awful denunciations of Divine wrath, harrowing descriptions of God as an infinite Avenger, pictures of hell as a place of eternal and infinite anguish, will not melt impenitent sinners, draw hesitating souls Godward, or direct anxious minds inquiring after the way of life. The dread of consequences, the fear of future punishment, has no elevating influence on the soul. It possesses no spiritual vitality, and its moral influence is of the very lowest kind. The enforcement of this motive degrades the Christian life. To the extent that it is made a motive of action, to the same extent is the life unchristianized. It is selfish and wholly unworthy of the lofty character of the true Christian. To teach that the High and Holy One, who acts only upon the purest and loftiest principles, draws men to the noblest ends of their being by any other attraction than the cords of love, is to wrest from God His sceptre and rob Him of His crown.

## CHAPTER II.

### *PROPER BASIS OF AN EVANGELICAL CREED.*

1. **T**HE point from which an object is viewed has much to do with the view taken. This holds good both in physical and spiritual vision. The non-perception of this fact was the cardinal error of the compilers of the Reformation Creeds. They ought to have started from Christ, instead of from abstract truths. They exhibited the Father in abstract conceptions, instead of through the Son. Christ is the stand-point from which the framers of a Creed should view the whole circle of Divine truth. This is the principle which Christ Himself lays down. "He that hath seen ME hath seen the Father." Christ is the centre of all renewed life, of all truth, of all existence, of all Divine revelation. The non-perception of this fundamental truth was the great error of the compilers of the Protestant formularies of Belief.

2. Christ came to reveal the Father by manifesting God in Himself. He came in love to

reveal the loving Heart of God. He showed the extent to which the Godhead would exert Its infinite power to rescue sinners. And this required a manifestation of the Father which only an equal with God *could* make. We must never allow our reverent admiration of Christ's human life to overlay our faith in His essential Divinity.

3. In the accomplishment of His work He exhibited the full power of the self-sacrificing love of the Godhead. He taught the ignorant, guided the erring, fed the hungry, healed the sick, the lame, the deaf, the blind, cast demons out of men, raised the dead. He never turned a deaf ear to a suppliant. Even in the agonies of dying He comforted the penitent thief and prayed for His murderers. In acts such as these He made visible the beneficent will of the Godhead regarding man.

4. Thus to "see the Son" is to "see the Father"—in all the perfections of Godhead bending in mercy and compassion over the rebellious race. The Father is seen as He is not seen in Nature, nor in Providence. Christ, "manifested in the flesh," exhibits the Father as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in mercy, not willing that any should perish, but desirous that all should turn to Him and

live; declaring by the most solemn oath that even He could utter that He hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner; that His supreme pleasure is in the sinner's turning to Him that he may live. In giving Christ to the world, God gave His highest and most precious gift. The gift was God's emphatic declaration that He desires the salvation of all men.

5. But the visible presentation which the Father makes of Himself in the Son hardly corresponds with the abstract definition of God given in the Modern Creeds. That definition, true in itself, even sublime in its presentation of the unseen God, is yet one that might have been written by Plato. It may awaken reverence in the hearts of Christian men, but it is powerless to awaken love in a rebellious spirit. It puts out of sight the primary truth of Christianity, namely, that God Himself came to the world, in the person of His son, to save the lost. "He that hath seen ME hath seen the Father." He hath seen the Father devoting His own Son for the salvation of sinners. This definition of God is fitted to speak to the inmost thoughts, and to touch the deepest emotions of the soul.

6. Christ did not represent the Father as a Despot, who for the vindication of His Sovereignty raises some to glory, and dooms others



to endless sufferings. Is not this an unthinkable conception of God? Is it possible to conceive that Almighty Power could raise souls to everlasting bliss, independently of their loving God? Or to doom souls to interminable woe, independently of their hatred of God? For the salvation of sinners God has connected the brightest exhibition of His glory with their *emancipation* from sin—the highest achievement possible even for the Godhead. The underlying attribute of the Infinite Essence is Self-sacrifice.

## CHAPTER III.

### *THE BONDAGE OF SIN.*

1. **T**HE conception that self-sacrificing love will not leave untried any reclaiming effort to win souls accords with the deepest instincts and desires of the human heart. The love of well-being is the essential condition of the power of choice ; otherwise the free agent is not brought into existence to attain the state most favourable for purity of life. The abuse of free agency is the *perversion* of the love of well-being into selfishness, but is not its *annihilation*. Free agency, in preferring self to God, perverts itself and sinks itself into bondage. A selfish man mistakes his love of self for the love of his own well-being, and hates whatever comes between him and a desired object.

2. Hence "the carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The fallen, by the ruling power of their lives, are self-doomed to an endless conflict of nature and life. And by

no effort of its own can the spirit so enslaved rise superior to the bondage into which it has brought itself. This is an awful condition ; but it is the inevitable result of the perversion of free agency, and no finite power can rescue it from that condition.

3. The self-sacrificing love of God is the only power that can act savingly on fallen man, or impart reconciling grace to the "carnal mind." And this power can be apprehended by the sinner only in faith. There is no other medium of right relationship between God and the sinner. In this lies the necessity of preaching the Gospel of Salvation to the world. Nothing else can effect a reconciliation between the sinner and God. The Spirit of God co-operates with the preaching by taking of the things of Christ and showing them to men's souls. But is this the characteristic of what is usually called preaching Christ ? No one will be bold enough to assert that it is.

4. The accurate presentation of the truth as it is in Jesus not being the usual characteristic of human preaching, may not the Spirit of God act in *other* circumstances than those in which His striving has not been effectual ? Doubtless the Spirit deals with the sinner on different occasions and in varying circumstances before

He effectually secures his regeneration. In this God's grace becomes the more conspicuous. The Holy Spirit's strivings may be ineffectual through the defective presentation of the Gospel, or through the heedlessness of the sinner. He who remains unconverted in certain circumstances may in others realize the power of the truth. And if this may occur in time, may there not be a possibility of the Holy Spirit's acting directly on the sinner's conscience in *other* spheres of existence? The salvation of the soul is the greatest work of God, and to accomplish this work the Godhead has consecrated the entire compass of the Divine being and action.

5. The Godhead overcame the principle of evil through the Incarnation, which was the very consummation of Divine Self-sacrifice. The Incarnation was God taking possession of that very nature whose powers had been voluntarily yielded up to evil. The death on the Cross was the Godhead's final triumph over all evil. Christ died both a victim and a Conqueror.

6. The conflict between human selfishness and the Divine Self-sacrifice manifested in the death of Christ afforded scope for the grandest achievement of the Infinite in Time. In that event all the powers and principles, all the

capacities and capabilities of Humanity, were brought into exercise. There are thus in the atonement infinite possibilities of future Divine action.

7. Still, there are mysteries connected with the permission of evil and the working out of the Divine ends which baffle human penetration. But these mysteries never lead to the perversion of human power or the infraction of the Divine law. Were it lawful to ascend in imagination into the Councils of the Infinite, we should perceive that no human system fully measures or reflects the Divine purposes. The advancing manifestations of the Divine will through the ages alone reveal the mind of God. These shed fresh and clear light on the ways of God to man. The Church has still fuller disclosures to make of "the secret hidden from ages and generations." Her understanding is enlarged, and her life becomes more Divine.

8. The sinner unrepentant descends into greater depths of sin, his enmity becomes more embittered, his misery more severe, his distance from God greater. But regeneration is possible to the most inveterate hater of God. Self-sacrifice is able to effect the recovery of even the most carnally-minded. The greater the guilt of the sinner, when converted his love is the stronger,

his experience the larger, his zeal the warmer. "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." This was the experience of "the chief of sinners."

9. The most heinous sin that ever was or could be committed was the murder of the Son of God. Yet Christ prayed—and never did He pray more fervently than—for the forgiveness of His murderers; and never was a prayer even of Christ's more eagerly listened to and readily answered. The answer of this prayer shows us that the most heinous and aggravated sin that can be committed may be forgiven; nay, may we not add that that prayer secured the forgiveness of all sin? Can it be imagined that Christ's prayer for such an object, in such circumstances, was unheeded? Was it a feigned prayer? Did it not ascend from the inner depths of His soul? And did it not touch the tenderest emotions of the Father's heart? Nay, did it not directly affect the powers and principles of universal existence? If ever there was sincerity in the heart of Christ—penetrating power in His cry and response in the being of God—it was certainly *then*.



## CHAPTER IV.

### *ON A FUTURE PROBATIONARY STATE.*

I. **T**HE truths of revelation are more clearly understood now than in former ages. God, in the stages of uncompleted revelation, held back from human knowledge certain truths, lest these might be perverted by men to their own condemnation. The Gospel itself was a mystery "hidden from ages and generations." It is in the order of the Divine government that truths which have long been kept secret should be disclosed to after-generations. Revelation is always gradual. "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath kept in His own power." But the truths which He did not reveal to His disciples have been disclosed to the Church in the course of the ages which have followed. The danger is now less of men perverting to their own destruction their clearer knowledge of the future destiny of those sections of mankind who live and die without the knowledge of Christ.

2. God reveals His truth in the manner best fitted to prevent evil-disposed minds from wresting it to their own destruction. To those who are capable of being drawn by love He speaks in love. To those who are bent on perverting His truth He speaks in threatenings. On this principle it was that Christ depicted in such vivid colours the terrors of the future condemnation. But the dread of future punishment exercises no regenerating influence, and therefore was never made by the Master a means for the accomplishment of His mission. Still, knowing well the wickedness of the human heart, He held up to view in vivid light the danger of realizing in a future state of being the dreadful consequences of wickedness in this life. But He never appealed to fear as a motive. In the very nature of things, that course of action was impossible for Him. It is not denied that the sentiment of fear does occupy a place in the moral discipline of mankind. It sometimes restrains the passions of the wicked. But it cannot melt the hard heart into love, nor bring the selfish to practise self-sacrifice.

3. The infinitely varied characters of men *may* require other stages of probation, in order that immortal spirits may be trained for higher con-

ditions of existence. One child is born with stronger tendencies to evil than another. One man inherits a moral constitution in which the gentler characteristics are deeply fixed. The early surroundings of one youth are helpful to his moral and spiritual growth, whilst those of another are baneful to both. The moral circumstances of one nation differ widely from those of another. Man may overlook these facts of human experience, but the Omniscient Impartial Judge never does. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

4. Geology has taught us that God created the universe by epochs, at long intervals. He so introduced each successive phase of cosmic development. And God makes known His will through successive dispensations, each of these being an advanced stage of Revelation. Now, the principle of analogy leads us to infer that God will continue this mode of continuous revelation in the after-spheres of existence. The state in which countless multitudes live and die leads to the hope that opportunities of turning to God will be afforded them in those future conditions of being. The clearer interpretation of Scripture inspires the same hope. A fuller understanding of the self-sacrificing love of God to man induces the expectation that there will be other dispensations of grace in worlds to come.

5. If this be not possible, and in conformity with the character of God, a dark cloud intervenes between us and God. Faith in His self-sacrificing love becomes very difficult of attainment, and a deep gloom settles down on minds seeking after the knowledge of the truth.

## CHAPTER V.

### *SCRIPTURAL INDICATIONS OF FUTURE PROBATION.*

1. **T**HE Scriptures teach that God discloses Himself through gradual stages and continuous dispensations. This Divine method of action is involved in the very idea of progressive enlightenment and spiritual discipline. Immortal minds can be trained in the knowledge of God only by instruction and discipline, carried on through successive ages. The work of bringing rebellious wills into loyal submission *may* require gradual manifestations of the Divine purpose, and infinitely varied experiences for mankind. No intelligent being could rest in the belief that God wills that myriads of immortal spirits should remain in the stage of spiritual ignorance throughout all their endless existence; or that He has brought into existence countless multitudes of spirits, with boundless capacities and infinite possibilities, in order that they may be condemned to endless misery by a single act of Sovereignty.



2. If God has dealt with man in the past by varied methods, may this not be also His manner of training him in the future? He "visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him, and shows mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments." May not this be equivalent to the declaration that the Divine mercy is a thousand-fold more powerful than human hatred, though never so obstinate?

3. May He not extend this principle of dealing with men into other worlds? Christ tells us that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for unbelieving Chorazin and Bethsaida. The meaning of these words *may* be that the light denied to Tyre and Sidon in this world will be afforded to them in the next. He affirmed that if the light withheld from Tyre and Sidon had been granted to them in their day, they would have repented in sack-cloth and ashes. If this be the view which God entertains of the possibilities of human repentance, will He, in the yearnings of His self-sacrificing love, allow the light to be hid for ever from their eyes? His language clearly denotes that the light which would have induced repentance in this world, but which was not

granted, will, when granted in the next world, lead to repentance.

4. Christ's declaration, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is not forgiven, "neither in this world nor in the world to come," certainly implies, if it does not distinctly teach, that there are *other* sins forgiven in the after-stages of existence. An angel was sent to Cornelius, ere he had heard a word about Christ, to announce to him that his prayers were heard and his alms accepted before God. Now, had Cornelius died before Peter arrived at Cæsarea and preached to him the Gospel, would he have perished, or would he, in the next world, have had an opportunity of acquiring a saving knowledge of Christ? Peter also declared to Cornelius, and to those assembled with him, that God is "no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." All this is in accordance with the spiritual consciousness of man. In the light of Peter's teaching, may we not ask whether those illustrious heathen who have been moved by the Spirit of God have perished for ever? Will *they* be given no opportunity of acquainting themselves with Christ in the after-state? Will the myriads who have never had an opportunity of hearing the Gospel, and have died with-

out faith, be granted *no* means of learning Christ?

5. If Christ went, either in His own person, or by His Spirit, and "preached to the spirits in prison," may we not conclude that there are stages of probation beyond the present life? Do not many who upon their first hearing of Christ reject Him, afterwards embrace Him? St Peter tells us that Christ went and "preached to the spirits in prison *which were sometimes disobedient.*" Does not this statement indicate that there are dispensations of mercy in the worlds to come?

6. Such conceptions of God's methods and ends are certainly far more in harmony with His self-sacrificing love than those views which involve a conception of His character that appals and repels the mind. The human mind cannot rest satisfied in the belief that all who die without faith in Christ are endlessly lost. The bare attempt to believe so dreadful a doctrine necessitates an unconscious effort to crush out the heart of humanity.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *SCRIPTURE DIFFICULTIES.*

1. **I**T is admitted that there are statements in the New Testament which at first sight seem to clash with others. Such, for example, are those texts which appear to teach the doctrine of endless punishment; and those texts, again, which seem to teach that Christ died only for a limited number of the race. Against these stand texts which teach that Christ died for all men, and that all men will ultimately be saved.

2. Now, are these apparently opposing texts really harmonious in essence, and capable of satisfactory reconciliation? Unless God's Word contradicts itself, there must be a higher unity in the perception of which we can ascend to a more comprehensive understanding of the principles of the Divine dealings with men. There must be some central principle which reconciles all God's teachings.

3. The principle cannot be found in any attempt to bring texts which speak of Christ's death as

being the propitiation for the sins of the whole world,—as being lifted up to draw all men unto Himself,—that He is reconciling all things to Himself,—that He must reign until He has put down all rule and all authority,—and that He will bring back the kingdom, and in the end deliver it up to God the Father, that God may be all in all—to bring these within the limitations of texts which seem to teach the endless punishment of the wicked, or that Christ died for only a limited number of the human race. The only successful method must bring both classes of texts into harmony. St John points to this solution when he writes that Christ “is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

4. Why does St John in the same breath speak of a limited and an unlimited power in Christ's death, except it be in order to teach us that there is both, and that the limited is not irreconcilable with the unlimited power? The same principle is shown in the Divine working for man's salvation through lengthened epochs, even in this world. The progress of creation is exhibited in Scripture through a successive series of epochs. The Jews held that there were seven heavens of progressively advancing glory ; and their idea corresponds with the modern belief



that the universe was created by a process of progressive development. And may not the world to come disclose the fact that the spiritual life in this and in after-states of existence is purified through successive stages of discipline? Any adequate conception of God's method of dealing with man—the being created in His own image, the crown of creation—must include the idea of continuity in the process of the Divine training. The human soul is designed by its Creator to be “filled with all the fulness of God.” We may therefore expect to find *apparent* contradictions in God's Word as well as in God's Providence.

5. That such were St Paul's views there can be no doubt. “The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God ; for the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the

redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope ; but hope that is seen is not hope ; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we wait with patience for it. Likewise also the Spirit helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."

## CHAPTER VII.

### *THE TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURE.*

1. **I**N the narrative of the introduction of sin into the world and the announcement of the Divine purpose to destroy it, we read that God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : he shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." In the struggle between human selfishness and Divine self-sacrifice the Divine principle is ever the conqueror.

2. In Isaiah we read that the Messiah "shall see of the travail of his soul, *and be satisfied.*" The result of Christ's sacrificial death shall be such as will afford HIM satisfaction. But nothing short of the total destruction of sin can satisfy the infinite longings of the Heart of the World's Saviour. The Baptist's exclamation was, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Christ said of Himself that He was sent into the world that "*whosoever* believeth in Him might be saved,"

and that He was not sent to "condemn the world, but that *the world* through Him might be saved." Again, "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all things* into His hands." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

3. St Peter and St John, on the occasion of their first miracle, declared that they wrought the miracle not by their own strength, but by the power of Him "whom the heavens must receive until the times of the *restitution of all things*." St Paul writes: "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that did put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Here Christ's reconciling work is represented as advancing until "*God shall be all in all*." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"—*not a portion* of the race

merely, but *the world*. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of the times God is gathering together in one *all things* in Christ; both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in Him." "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "For it hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile *all things* unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven." In these passages St Paul makes it as plain as language can enable him that God is carrying on through Christ a reconciling work which will embrace the entire universe.

4. "God will have all men to be saved." "The Living God, who is the Saviour *of all men*." "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared." St Paul's language in these texts also is clear and distinct in its avowal of the universality of God's salvation.

5. Christ became incarnate that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." "God is not willing

that any should perish." In these words St Peter reasserts what Ezekiel had long before affirmed, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." "Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*." "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of *the world*." "Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." "God will wipe away *all* tears from all eyes." "There shall be no more curse." "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Are these inspired texts to be interpreted in a manner opposite to their plain and obvious meaning? It is admitted that there are other texts which seem to bear a limited reference. But there is a higher unity in the perception of which the one class of texts is seen not to clash with the other, but rather to aid in ensuring a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of **God's Word**.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### *INFERENCE FROM SCRIPTURE TEXTS.*

1. **I**T is now agreed that there is a wide difference between plain statements of facts and figurative descriptions; and that plain statements are not to be interpreted by figurative descriptions, but rather figurative descriptions by plain statements. This principle applies both to those passages of Scripture which seem to speak of God's love as partial and to those which represent it as boundless.

2. God is never spoken of in Scripture as SOVEREIGNTY; but He is declared to be LOVE. His Sovereignty, then, must be conditioned by Love, not His Love by Sovereignty. His Sovereignty is His *right* of acting as He wills, not the essence of His being. His Love *underlies* His Sovereignty, not His Sovereignty His Love. If this were not the case, God could not be declared to be "a *just* God and a Saviour." His Sovereignty is His right to call into existence whatsoever creatures He chooses, endowing them with such

powers, faculties, and conditions of life as He pleases. His *justice* is made apparent in dealing with His creatures according as these various conditions may require.

3. God being Love, long-suffering, mercy, grace, self-sacrifice, are dearer and more glorious to Him than Sovereignty. When Moses besought a glimpse of His glory, the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed Himself to be "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and by no means clearing the guilty."

4. The texts which speak of God's love, mercy, and grace, are clear and lucid, plain and direct. Those which refer to His judgments and His punishment of sin are for the most part figurative, and require to be explained in the spirit of the other class of texts.\*

5. St John affirms that Christ was "the *true* Light, even the light which lighteneth every man coming into the world." Christ is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

\* The quotations made in the previous chapter are mostly taken from the authorised version of the New Testament; those in the present chapter are taken from the revised version. We quote from both versions in order to give the texts quoted due prominence.

world." "The Father hath given all things into His hand." Christ Himself declares that "God sent not the Son into the world to judge, but that *the world* should be saved through Him." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw *all men* unto Myself." Here are clear and direct declarations of God's purpose to send His Son into the world *to save the world*. In His solemn address to His Father, Christ said, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do." Are we, in the face of these declarations, to rest in the belief that the Father sent the Son to fulfil the work of saving the world, but that He will save only *a part* of the world?

6. St Paul asserts that "God hath shut up all unto disobedience that He might have mercy upon all." St Peter speaks of the "times of the restoration of all things." St Paul again writes, "I say then, did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid! But by their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now, if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? . . . For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the

receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" In the light of such teaching, may we not reasonably hope that God, in suffering so many of mankind to pass out of this world ignorant of Christ, may have a gracious design of calling them to repentance in the future life? As He is to call Israel even in this life from their state of unbelief to faith, may He not in the world to come call the unbelieving to repentance? "And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again." "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out!"

7. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His Cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens." "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that *every tongue* should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "According to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Him unto a dispensation

of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." "Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For He put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He saith, all things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things unto Him. And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all?" Can any unprejudiced mind read these sublime declarations without coming to the conclusion that the Father is working out, by the Son, a glorious design of reconciling universal being to Himself? "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." "The living God who is the Saviour of all men." "Who willeth that all men should be saved." "For there is one God, one Mediator also between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all." "The Lord is

long-suffering to you-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And God Himself declares with the solemnity of an oath, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live." Are these correct or false declarations of God's intentions through His Son? Can these words convey any other meaning than their plain and obvious signification? And do they not clearly teach that God desires and is working through His Son for the salvation of all men?

8. "Since, then, the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Here we obtain a glimpse of the mystery of the Cross. In the permission of evil, and in the recovery from sin, God is accomplishing the grandest work of time and eternity—a work worthy of the infinite perfections of His being—a work which, when fully completed, will draw forth from the hearts of all created beings praise worthy to be ascribed to "the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity." "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be



the Saviour of the world." "And if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." "And there shall be no curse any more." "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." Now, if all men are not to be ultimately saved—nay, if God by an immutable decree has doomed myriads of human beings to endless destruction, how could the apostle of the Gentiles under the inspiration of God declare "that where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly?" If all are not to be ultimately saved, how can we believe in the truth of God's Word?

## CHAPTER IX.

### *APPARENTLY ADVERSE TEXTS.*

1. **S**IN and suffering are inseparable. To escape from suffering, the sinful being must rise out of sin. Now, suffering may be either penal or disciplinary. Penal suffering, under the dispensation of grace, will be more or less disciplinary—not in itself, for all penal infliction is hardening to the sinner; but the influence and agencies connected with God's self-sacrifice will through it exert a salutary power. We may hope that all penal inflictions will be more or less disciplinary. In this view, texts which at first sight seem adverse to a future probationary state are, on a more careful consideration, found not to be so.

2. The terms "everlasting," "eternal," "forever," do not always denote endlessness, but "epoch" or "age" long, as in Hab. iii. 6: "The everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow." In connection with the idea of the earth being destroyed and its works burned up, the phrase "everlasting" clearly cannot

denote endlessness. The same in Genesis :—  
“And I will give unto thee . . . all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.” “And I will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.” “Unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills.” “And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you.” “Eternal,” in Romans xvi. 25, does not mean endlessness : literally, it is “eternal times.” (In Eph. “the eternal of the eternal,” in Rev. “the eternal of the eternal.”) So of “Perpetual.” In Jer., “perpetual sleep,” “perpetual generations,” “perpetual statutes for your generations.” And so of “for ever.” In Deut., “And he shall be thy servant for ever.” In Ex., “And they shall inherit it for ever.” In Deut., “It shall be an help for ever.” “And he shall be thy servant for ever.” In 2 Kings, “The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and to thy seed for ever.” “Will I put my name for ever.” In 1 Chron., “King over Israel for ever.” In all these texts the idea of endlessness is excluded.

3. “Damnation” signifies “judgment” or “condemnation.” In St John we find, “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, hath no man condemned thee?” In Romans, St Paul says, “He that doubteth is damned if he eat.” In 1 Cor., “He that eateth unworthily eateth and drinketh

damnation to himself." In 1 Timothy, "Young widows will marry, having damnation;" and the writer adds, "I will that young women marry."

4. "Hell" denotes either "the grave" or the "invisible world." In Acts ii. 27, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Amongst the apparently adverse texts must be included Christ's declaration regarding the sin against the Holy Ghost, "which is not forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." We have elsewhere shown that this is a sin of its own kind, a sin in its essence differing from all other sins which men commit, a sin which *in its very nature* is unpardonable; but a sin which through grace may be repented of, and the repenting sinner be forgiven, to the glory of God.

5. In depicting the scene of the general judgment, Christ represents Himself as saying to those on His left hand:—"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This is a figurative representation of a spiritual occurrence, and its obvious meaning rests on the signification of the word translated "everlasting." If the meaning of the word in the original Hebrew or Greek be "endlessness," Christ must be under-

stood as declaring in favour of the endless torments of the finally wicked. But if "*aeon*" denote "epoch-long," or "age-long," Christ's declaration will denote the epoch of the probationary state into which the wicked or unrepentant are cast, or the duration of their unrepentant condition in their epoch state. Now, this word "epoch" must be allowed to be the correct meaning of those much disputed terms—the true signification of the Greek words rendered—"eternal" and "everlasting." They doubtless denote endlessness in some connections, as "Eternal God." But the context determines the limited or unlimited signification, and in the light of other Scripture teaching we are bound to assign the limited signification to the term employed by Christ in His sentence of the wicked on his left hand to perdition.

6. No form of material existence is endless. If punishment be external (*i.e.*, inflicted by power acting from without), the suffering must in the very nature of things be temporary. If the suffering arise from within (*i.e.*, from internal conflict of nature), it must be contemporaneous with the existence of the sinful life, or the spirit in the state of conflict. If the conflict, or sinfulness, be brought to an end by restoring the harmony of the nature, or holiness of life, the

suffering must of necessity cease. And if spiritual essence be necessarily an enduring substance, incapable from its very nature of dissolution or destruction, unless by annihilation—which is unthinkable—it is a very weak argument to affirm that, if the epoch of suffering should terminate in repentance unto life, the epoch of bliss must also terminate; in other words, that if eternity of punishment shall come to an end, the everlasting life shall also cease.

7. Those texts do not, in fact, indicate ceaseless duration, but only periods of longer or shorter continuance. Nor do they countenance the idea of the endless punishment of the unrepentant wicked. Besides, they are chiefly figurative, and are not to be taken in the literal sense. But the chief ground of objection to such a conclusion is found in the texts cited in the previous chapter. Those texts clearly teach that there are after periods of probation, repentance, and salvation. And if in the face of these texts it should be maintained that the texts cited in the present chapter declare in favour of endless punishment, the Bible plainly contradicts itself: a conclusion quite untenable.



## CHAPTER X.

### *MAY NOT OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OF RECOVERY BE GIVEN TO MAN?*

1. **T**HE Atonement is the greatest work of the Godhead, surpassing all its other works in majesty and grandeur. In its most important aspect it must be viewed as anticipating the restoration of humanity—as not undertaken for a few isolated individuals, but for the race. It would be a strangely unworthy conception of the Infinite and Eternal God to conceive of Him as designing and undertaking the most stupendous of all His works for the benefit only of a few of His creatures, instead of influencing for good the entire range of His intelligent offspring. Viewed philosophically, the Atonement is not simply the removal of obstacles that lie in the way of the sinner's return to God, but it is a manifestation, an influence, a persuasive grace, a commanding power, to attract the attention and move the will of all God's intelligent offspring. Its

influence pervades the universe, and its power is interminable in extent and duration. Viewed in its aspect of universality, and considering the incalculable expenditure of moral resources in connection with it, as witnessed in the humiliation and death of the Son of God, may it not be presumed that, in some way or other, in the complex and comprehensive methods of God's working, it will attain its triumph in the salvation of the universe?

2. The development of God's plan of salvation is gradual—slowly unfolding through the ages—expanding and enlarging with the progress of time—widening and deepening in the evolutions of the Infinite Plan. Its practical working is still in process: and may it not be supposed that its development in this department may go forward in other states of being, until the entire race shall have been saved?

3. Several profoundly interesting queries are suggested by these positions. First, Can the Atonement be regarded as perfect, if any are ultimately left outside its beneficent influence? Secondly, Can sin be regarded as destroyed, whilst multitudes in other worlds are still in a state of sin and misery? Thirdly, Can we conceive of a restoration or repairing of the ruins of the Fall, while untold multitudes con-

tinue in the condition of the lost? Fourthly, Can we believe in the works of the devil being destroyed—the Saviour resting with full complacency in the results of His self-sacrifice—the Father delighting in the complete perfection of the saving work of His Son—the Spirit of all Grace rejoicing in His cessation of striving with sinners—whilst myriads more of men are suffering the torments of hell than are enjoying the bliss of heaven? The whole creation, and the Godhead itself, exulting in the kingdom brought back to the Father, and at the same time untold millions exulting in their rebellious defiance of Jehovah?

4. Is there not a general longing for restoration in the heart of humanity? What is “the groaning and travailing of the whole creation,” of which St Paul speaks, if not this? May not an argument be grounded on this passage in favour of some process in a future state, the result of which will be the ultimate restoration of all?

5. Man has the capability for being benefited by the highest work of the Godhead. He was created with this capability. God suffered him to fall from the lofty eminence on which he was brought into existence; and He provided the mightiest power of universal existence to meet the necessities of well-being in fallen humanity.

Those who, dying in infancy and in heathenism, have never had the opportunity on earth of being benefited by this greatest manifestation of God's love to fallen man—His self-sacrifice on behalf of self-ruined sinners—will surely not be for ever deprived of it. Would it be consistent with the majesty and grandeur of this greatest work of the Godhead—would it be consistent with the needs of lost souls who have not had the opportunity of believing in Christ, and whose innate cravings after well-being have not been annihilated—would it be unbecoming the grace of God, or the conditions of human well-being—to afford these victims of circumstance another opportunity of embracing Christ? Would affording to lost souls other opportunities in the after-states of existence be inconsistent with the majesty of Christ's atonement—with the capabilities and cravings of fallen man—with the self-sacrificing love of the Godhead? Would this grieve the redeemed in glory, or the multitudes of the heavenly hosts?

## CHAPTER XI.

### *CONDITIONS OF AFTER-REPENTANCE.*

I. **T**HE work of Christ is not so limited as only to embrace a select few in this world, or to operate for only a brief period of probation in time. It is of such vast magnitude, and so enduring, as to influence the entire universe, by diffusing the Divine principle of self-sacrifice throughout all conditions of future existence. But if the operation of self-sacrifice be so vast, the principle of God's dealings with men is similarly so. The teaching of Scripture on this point is uniform throughout. May not the eye of omniscience, in the operation of the Divine self-sacrifice, watch over the wanderers through their initial stages of probation, until they too are brought under the influence of self-sacrifice?

2. These views of man's future possibilities do not imply that the after-stages of probation will conflict with the equity of God's proceedings in the present life. The Divine justice will be as fully maintained in the future as in the present.

Such is the perfection of creation and providence, that God's justice can never be invaded, and certainly not in His process of recovering the fallen. Wheresoever and whomsoever a creature may be, he must realize to the fullest extent the consciousness of his being in such a condition of existence. In the very nature of spiritual life or death there never can be the least divergence between realization and consciousness. As a spirit is conscious of its state, so it must realize that state—whether of life or death—simply to *be*. In a state of conflict or sin, it must experience to the full sin's bitterness. In a condition of harmony or holiness of life, it will experience the fulness of holy joy. This consciousness will of necessity be more intense in the after-state, because the conditions of that state will be of a wholly spiritual nature. We have only a vague conception of what may be possible to spirits or human souls in the disembodied state.

3. The stages of future probation will probably be of longer duration than the present. Men are born into this life with the bias of self-will ; but the unconverted go into the next world with formed habits of evil, and the struggle and pain of rising out of such habits must be correspondingly severe. A soul cannot descend



to the depths of perdition without struggling against conscience and the principles of well-being. A soul cannot rise out of perdition without struggling for conscience, and against acquired corruptions. Sin is a tremendous evil to the sinner, as well as to universal being. Its commission necessarily carries the sinner downward, and it cannot be escaped from without earnest and severe struggles. Returning to spiritual life among the lost may be somewhat after the analogy of restoration from drowning. Death by drowning is delusively easy; but the return to life is painful in the extreme, warranting the figurative language of the parables of Scripture. Still, even should a fallen spirit have to escape from perdition by a stair-case of fire, it would ascend through a lofty flight to a glorious immortality. The experience of passing through such an ascent will be of the utmost value in the future existence of such a spirit. Its education in the self-sacrifice of the Divine Being will be beyond computation.

4. St Peter tells us that Christ "went and preached to the spirits in prison, which were sometimes disobedient." Does not this mystical statement indicate that there are dispensations of mercy in the invisible world? In this view

of God's dealings we rise to a higher and more comprehensive understanding of the future state. We are able to see that if God bears with rebellious spirits for a longer period, He yet does not shut them up in endless despair—which condition would be to make them still more wicked, hardened, and confirmed in sin. It would perpetuate rebellion, and render the curse all the severer. Would this be compatible with infinite goodness and self-sacrifice, or a display of Sovereignty that would be glorifying to God?

5. The suffering of the sinner must necessarily increase with the bitterness of his enmity to God and the severity of the conflict it entails. Thus the sinner, even in this life, has no inducement from the possibilities of a future probation to disregard his present privileges. If he dreams of an easier method of turning to God in the next stage of his existence, he will only deceive himself the more. But, indeed, there is little or no fear of any sinner delaying repentance on this ground. It is the love of self that is the one great hindrance to repentance. The birth-throes of a late repentance may be severer than those of an early conversion. If this be so even in this life, the agonies of the repentant soul will doubtless be

severer in the life to come. The miseries incidental to a sinful condition, and the struggle involved in rising through repentance out of the conflict of sin into harmony of life and relationship with God, may involve such an amount and duration of suffering as may fully explain all the figurative descriptions used in Scripture to describe the condition of the lost.

6. Late repentance can never regain the lost advantages of an early conversion. If Christ Himself came to earth to win the glory and joy of His Divine self-sacrifice, there must be in this world pre-eminent advantages for the disciple who imitates his Master. Still, if the sinner passes from a state of enmity into one of loving obedience, late in life, or in the world to come, he will realize the benefits of such a change, and will have all that is implied in Christ's declaration, that "to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much."

## CHAPTER XII.

### *THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISCIPLINE OF SOULS.*

1. **M**AN'S nature is the highest condition of finite existence, and is therefore capable of the highest education and discipline. But these do not consist in his being made a partaker of the attributes of the Uncreated Essence—for *that*, in the very nature of things, is an impossibility—but in his being made a participant of the Divine life, so as to be “filled with all the fulness of God.” As his powers are illimitable in their development, his capacities for the reception of the Divine life boundless, and his capabilities for progress endless, there can be no limitations to his discipline in the immortal life.

2. The gradual disclosures of the mysteries of the Infinite to the limited capabilities of the finite mind is involved in the education and discipline of man. The deepest mystery in the manifestation of the Divine Being is the self-sacrifice of the Godhead. The training of man in the practical

experience of this mystery must of necessity be the primary element of the education and discipline of those immortal spirits which are to occupy the highest positions in heaven, and which are to be engaged in the grandest work of the eternal ages. If this were not to be, the profoundest part of man's moral and spiritual training would be lacking.

3. The most mysterious incident of the Divine government is the permission of evil. Do all that we can to comprehend this mystery, we cannot penetrate its cause. But we may perceive something of the *why*. We may perceive that this permission is *preliminary* and subservient to the self-sacrifice of the Godhead, and that thus is shown the great power of God in the training and discipline of spirits who are to realize all the fulness of the Divine life. And yet we cannot admit that it was necessary to the outcome of the depths of the Infinite Essence; for then evil would be a necessary element in the development of the Divine purpose, and would cease to be evil. But while we cannot penetrate the mystery, we may learn how subservient it is to the higher moral and spiritual training of man. If the loftiest display of the perfections of the Divine life be exhibited through the self-sacrifice of the Godhead, the

grandest display of the higher perfection of human life is also seen in the self-sacrifice of man. In the struggles against sin, and in his rising superior to evil, man displays the noblest heroism of his finite life.

4. If the overruling of evil even in this life be involved in the grandest and most sublime act of the Divine operation, and if the loftiest displays of human heroism be manifested in the same manner, may it not be so likewise in the future state of being? If God, in the ascent to the loftiest display of the Divine heroism, has passed through numerous epochs of creation, providence, and grace, may not the consummation of the work of salvation similarly employ epochs of duration? If passing through evil in order to rise out of it has, even in time, given the means of a higher education and discipline to man's immortal spirit, may not God employ similar modes of training throughout man's endless being? If the higher life of the saint on earth be that which is consecrated to the conversion of sinners, may not the loftiest employment of the redeemed in heaven be devoted to a like service? They cannot be unemployed in the service of God. "They serve Him day and night in His temple." And we cannot conceive of a nobler or of a more illustrious service than



being employed in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom—bringing rebel spirits from the bondage of sin into the consciousness of the Divine life. A glorious employment, a glorious triumph, and a most blessed consciousness!

5. In the revolutions of time, under the Divine permission of evil, there are no perversions of Divine power, principle, or law. It is only states of consciousness, or of conscious realizations, that change. And so in the spiritual region there is ample scope for an endless variety of manifestations of the Divine will, and for the richest experiences of the finite mind. "God moves in a mysterious way"—in ways incomprehensible to man in his present life; but ways which are ever working out God's "bright designs" in such a manner as will, in the end, display in purest radiance the Divine glory.

6. Who will be bold enough to assert that the permission of evil has not been made subservient to the education and discipline of spirits created in the image of God, by bringing them into the loftiest conditions of the consciousness of self-sacrifice in passing through infinite varieties of experience of evil, and infinite realizations of its bitterest fruits? The education and discipline of human souls for the highest conditions of life

and being is the work which the Godhead is now accomplishing through the Church. The fall of man thus opens up to view boundless possibilities for still more wondrous displays of the Divine self-sacrifice. Are these infinite possibilities even dimly discerned by the Church, as it is certainly desirable they should be? If the fall of man in Paradise opened up possibilities of self-sacrifice to both God and man—if the fall of Israel was made subservient to the riches of the Gentiles—if the restoration of fallen Israel shall be as life from the dead to the Gentiles, in their fuller consciousness and manifestation of the Divine glory—may not the permitted continuance of so vast a number of the human race in an unconverted state passing into the invisible world be overruled in connection with the Divine self-sacrifice for higher and more god-like ends of grace? May not a glorious work be going on even now in the invisible regions, which eye hath not seen, nor selfish human spirits conceived of as possible?

7. The Son of God's mission in time—His great work of atonement for the manifestation of the Divine grace in self-sacrifice, and for bringing back the Divine kingdom, that God may be "all in all"—is the grandest undertaking of God

in time or in eternity. Is that event designed to influence only a few of the race? Is it not intended to embrace universal being in all its possibilities of education and discipline, and to be a work destined to prove worthy of the infinite heart of the Almighty and all-loving Father?

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *THE POSSIBLE FUTURE.*

I. **T**HE self-sacrificing love of the Godhead towards its enemies may contain in it such a power of softening rebellious hearts as will overcome even the bitterest enmity of fallen spirits. And it will doubtless put forth its utmost efforts to reclaim the most inveterate foes. That it should so act is involved in its very nature. To hold an opposite opinion is to make God partial in the display of His grace. The purpose of Divine grace cannot be conditioned by any thing external to itself. We cannot conceive of its resting in any thing short of the fullest display of its inmost depths and the exercise of its loftiest powers. There *may* be in the future such a revelation of the infinite grace of Self-sacrificing Love—its light may so flood the universe with its radiance—as to overcome all enmity to God.

2. It is beyond our power to conceive of the possibility of Infinite Love being ultimately baffled. “With God all things are possible”—

all things, that is to say, that do not involve a contradiction in their very nature. This declaration reason accepts. If, then, all the perfections of God—His highest wisdom and His greatest power—are pledged to every effort to reclaim the erring, when will His self-sacrificing love terminate? What will it leave undone to secure the fulfilment of its inmost desire? There can be no contradiction, no limits, to the working out of Infinite Self-sacrifice. It has already overcome the most malignant enmity of selfishness. It has “destroyed death, and him that had the power of death.” For the conversion of the chief of sinners it was pleased to come forth in an unusual manifestation. What it did for the chief of the sinners here, it may do for the greatest sinners hereafter. We cannot set any limitations either of space or duration to its manifestations; nor to the possibility of enmity yielding to love so generous.

3. The instinctive desire after well-being cannot die in the human spirit. It can only be destroyed by a radical change in the constitution of man. If such a change could take place, man would be no longer man. And to punish or to save this changed being would not be, on the one hand, the punishment of a human

transgressor by the destruction of his soul, nor on the other the salvation of a believer by quickening in him the consciousness of the Divine life. A firm belief in the unlimited power of Christ's death enables us to obtain a glimpse of the boundlessness of self-sacrificing grace. If its power be not limited to this sphere of existence, there must be *other* spheres and *other* periods of probation where it will have scope for its utmost operation.

4. Conversion is a new starting-point—a new epoch in life—a new operation of Divine power. Conversion is not achieved by law—by an unbroken continuity of legal operations in man's life—but by a manifestation of self-sacrificing love changing the whole current of his life. The converted soul becomes great only as it receives and manifests the indwelling of the Divine life. And when this indwelling is fully realized, as it will assuredly be, the end will come. Sin will have fully exposed itself. Selfishness will have fully shown its heinousness. Grace will be all-triumphant. All imperfection will be done away in the consummation of the perfect purpose. "God will be all in all."

5. The dreams of imagination, the soarings of poetical fancy, the sighings of the oppressed, the speculations of philosophy, the disclosure

of science, the ardent devotion of patriotism, the efforts of philanthropy, the prayers of saints, the predictions of prophets, the teaching of apostles, will all pass away, and will all be surpassed in the completion of the Divine purpose in Christ before the world began. Self-sacrifice will reign through universal being. The glory of the Triune Jehovah will be acknowledged, will be delighted in and admired by all created existence. Death and hell will be cast into the lake of utter oblivion. "There will be no more curse." Where sin abounded it will be found that grace "hath much more abounded." And the exulting shout of the universe will be, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints! Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name; for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee, for Thy designs are made manifest!"



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